

“The Old Army” 1898-1941: A Blueprint for the Future?

by

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<p>The U.S. Army faces a challenge of maintaining a force able to meet global commitments and in an era of shrinking budgets when no immediate peer competitor justifies a large standing army. Additionally, the focus of military strategy has shifted to the Pacific. This is not a new situation. The Army faced a similar dilemma during the period of 1898 to 1941. During this time the Army had to maintain a continuous presence in the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the Panama Canal Zone while simultaneously mobilizing for World War I, deploying expeditions to China, Russia, and Siberia, fighting a border skirmish against Mexican bandits, conducting peace keeping operations in Cuba and maintaining stateside garrisons. In a country traditionally wary of maintaining a large standing Army, and with no direct threat to justify having one, this required the Army of the period to have several characteristics: It had to be relatively small, but able to expand rapidly through the use of reserves; it had to be highly selective, professional and well trained to accomplish much with a small force, as well as provide a skilled cadre for mobilization; finally, it had to rely on native soldiers overseas to expand its capabilities and to augment its forces. These same characteristics and competencies may serve as an effective blueprint for guiding current reform initiatives as the Army transitions to meet contemporary security challenges.</p>					
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ABSTRACT

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The Army faces a challenge of meeting global commitments in an era of shrinking budgets when no immediate peer competitor justifies a large standing army. The Army faced a similar dilemma during the period of 1898 to 1941 when required to maintain a continuous presence in the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Panama; additional emergent commitments along the southern border and overseas in China and Russia further exacerbated the strategic challenges facing Army leadership. In a country traditionally wary of maintaining a large standing Army – and with no direct threat to justify having one – the Army of this period included several fundamental characteristics: a modest force able to expand rapidly through the use of strategic reserves; a well educated, professional cadre to facilitate mobilization; and, institutionalized force augmentation through the use of native soldiers. While inherent in the "Old Army," these attributes are largely absent from the modern Army. A return to these organizational characteristics may serve as an effective blueprint for guiding reform initiatives as the Army transitions to meet contemporary security challenges.

“THE OLD ARMY” 1898-1941: A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE?

Before 1939 the United States Army was small, but it was professional. Its tiny officer corps was parochial but true. Its members devoted their time to the study of war, caring little what went on in the larger society around them. They were centurions, and the society around them not their concern.

When so ordered, they went to war. Spreading themselves thinner still, they commanded and trained the civilians who heeded the trumpets call. The civilians did the fighting, of course – but they did it the Army’s way.¹

—T.R. Ferenbach
This Kind of War

Today the U.S. Army faces a challenge of maintaining a force able to meet global commitments in an era of shrinking budgets when no immediate peer competitor justifies maintaining the large standing Army organized and resourced primarily for Cold War operations in Europe. Additionally, U.S. military strategy is reorienting toward the Pacific region. This dilemma seems a huge departure from what those in uniform consider the normal state of affairs. All currently serving in the Army today, as well as those currently in political power in our government, have the post World War II Cold War Army as their primary frame of reference of what a peacetime Army should look like. This was an Army with a large standing active duty force with much of its strength forward deployed to fight a large scale continental war in Europe. It was supported with manpower obtained through conscription for 25 years until the government discontinued Selective Service in 1973. It was an Army which saw its reserve component evolve from a strategic reserve into an operational reserve, becoming part of normal troop rotation to emergent contingencies in recent years. It obtained its officers from a variety of commissioning sources who were promoted and selected for school on an increasingly egalitarian basis during the post war period in order to maintain its large strength.

A study of our history shows that what we regard as a normal state of affairs is in fact a historical anomaly. From 1775 until 1941 the Army had traditionally been a small frontier based and expeditionary force, able to expand rapidly in time of crisis and then able to shrink back to a peacetime size that was economically and politically sustainable. The strategic dilemma posed at the onset of the 20th century in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War America required that the United States maintain a number of overseas commitments, particularly in the Pacific. From 1898 to 1941 the Army had to fight an active insurgency in the Philippines for 15 years, and then maintain a large, continuous presence there until World War II. It deployed expeditions to China in 1900, Siberia, and Russia from 1918-1922, intervened in Mexico in 1914, fought a border skirmish against Mexican bandits from 1916-1917, conducted peace keeping operations in Cuba from 1898 to 1904 and again from 1907 to 1909, and maintained overseas garrisons in Puerto Rico, Panama, Hawaii and Alaska. In a country traditionally wary of maintaining a large standing Army, and with no direct threat to justify having one, this required the Army of the period to have several characteristics: It had to be relatively small, but able to expand rapidly through the use of reserves; it had to be highly selective, professional and well trained to accomplish much with a small force, as well as provide a skilled cadre for mobilization; finally it had to rely on native soldiers overseas to expand its capabilities and augment U.S. Army forces.

Experience with problems of mobilization during the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the need to maintain new global commitments dictated the need to maintain a larger standing force and a more readily mobilized reserve component in the event of

larger scale conflicts. The basis for the changes the Army would make came from the writings of Colonel Emory Upton in a book published after his death, *The Military Policy of the United States*. Upton felt that the Army suffered from a number of problems which caused it to be militarily weak and slow to mobilize. He felt that chief among these problems was an over-reliance on state controlled militia, lack of a federally controlled volunteer reserve with federally appointed officers, and the lack of a comprehensive system of officer education to provide a professionally trained core for the Army when it mobilized.² Upton knew that maintaining a large standing Army was contrary to the American tradition, but felt that a properly trained and structured reserve and officer corps would allow rapid mobilization, stating, "We cannot maintain a great Army in peace, but we can provide a scheme for officering a large force in a time of war."³ His proposed solution was to maintain a three tiered system of a Regular Army, a federally controlled Volunteer Reserve and the Militia. He felt the Regular Army could be as small as only 1,000 per 1,000,000 of population if led by an elite, well trained officer Corps. To this end Upton advocated a comprehensive system of officer education. The Volunteer Reserve would be trained and able to quickly fill out cadre strength units maintained by the Regular Army. The State Militia would remain a State controlled force, only to be used for insurrection or to repel invasions as Upton felt the Constitution intended.⁴

After the Spanish-American War, recently appointed Secretary of War Elihu Root was introduced to the writings of Upton and used them as the basis for his program of reforms to improve the Army. His reforms provided the institutional framework around which the Army would organize for the first half of the 20th century: A relatively small but

well trained regular Army which could expand quickly for a large conflict through mobilization of a reserve component subject to increased federal control.

A study of the size of the regular Army, its deployed commitments and size relative to the population from the period 1898-1941 (table 1) reveals a number of interesting facts. In terms of overall strength from 1898 to 1941, the Army roughly followed Upton's formula of 1,000 Regulars per 1,000,000 of population, maintaining a force size just under this figure prior to World War I and just slightly over this figure after. While we do not know how Upton arrived at this figure, the trend would indicate that over time Regular Army strength of roughly one tenth of one percent was what was economically and politically sustainable. The table also indicates that the Regular Army had a large percentage of its strength deployed overseas. After the Spanish American War, during the initial stages of the Philippine Insurrection – excluding the periods during World War I and the pre-World War II mobilization – the Regular Army had between 25 and 38 percent of its strength stationed overseas. Finally, as a way to increase its strength for operations in the Philippines, the Army increasingly relied upon locally recruited Philippine Scouts. From 1922 onward, the Scouts would make up more than half of the U.S. Army strength in the Philippines. Though much larger than its pre-Spanish-American War counterpart, the Army of this era was stretched thin, with often only the overseas units manned at full strength.⁵ In spite of this, however, it was quickly able to expand to many times its peacetime size on two occasions, and then drawdown to a sustainable size in the conflict's aftermath.

Year	U.S Pop. in millions ⁶	Army Total	% of Pop.	Philippine Total	Philippines US Troops	Philippine Scouts	Other Overseas Troops	% Troops Overseas
1898	75	28,183	.04	Peacetime strength prior to the Spanish American War.				
1898	75	274,717	.37	22,945	22,945	0	24,020	17.1
1899	75	99,160	.13	32,315	32,315	0	12,505	45.2
1900	76.1	98,790	.13	39,948	71,528	466	11,726	52.3
1901	77.2	84,513	.11	43,239	38,193	5,046	7,400	59.9
1902	79.1	73,187	.09	22,433	17,355	5,078	2,244	33.7
1903	80.6	64,266	.08	22,712	17,848	4,904	1,951	38.4
1904	82.2	65,946	.08	17,810	12,723	5,087	1,593	29.4
1905	83.8	66,956	.08	18,375	13,000	5,147	1,752	30.0
1906	85.5	67,253	.08	17,931	12,802	5,129	6,987	37.1
1907	87.0	62,398	.07	18,046	13,584	4,462	6,625	39.5
1908	88.7	81,687	.09	18,306	12,768	5,538	7,168	31.2
1909	90.5	85,263	.09	19,966	14,240	5,729	3,069	27.0
1910	92.4	80,521	.09	16,869	11,603	5,266	3,208	24.9
1911	93.9	83,675	.09	17,839	12,224	5,615	3,882	26.0
1912	95.3	91,461	.10	17,375	11,715	5,660	8,087	27.8
1913	97.2	92,035	.09	17,238	11,655	5,583	11,071	30.8
1914	99.1	97,760	.10	14,778	9,572	5,278	16,882	32.4
1915	100.5	105,993	.11	18,521	12,909	5,612	18,747	35.2
1916	102.0	107,641	.11	17,669	11,884	5,785	18,324	33.4
1917	103.3	244,025	.24	20,004	14,434	5,702	21,002	16.8
1918	103.2	2,219,685	2.15	16,137	9,399	6,738	1,440,713	65.6
1919	104.5	846,498	.81	14,200	5,255	8,159	388,903	47.6
1920	106.5	200,299	.19	19,328	12,179	7,149	50,925	35.1
1921	108.5	228,650	.21	13,251	5,524	7,112	24,838	14.3
1922	110.0	146,507	.13	13,869	6,939	6,930	23,655	25.6
1923	111.9	131,254	.12	11,527	4,415	7,112	25,844	25.8
1924	114.1	140,943	.12	11,808	4,575	7,233	23,517	25.1
1925	115.8	135,254	.11	11,285	4,601	6,684	26,357	27.8
1926	117.4	133,443	.11	12,189	5,019	7,170	26,693	29.5
1927	119.0	133,268	.11	11,388	4,430	6,958	26,635	28.5
1928	120.5	134,505	.11	11,343	4,857	6,486	26,796	28.4
1929	121.8	137,529	.11	11,337	4,770	6,567	27,249	28.1
1930	123.1	137,645	.11	11,232	4,690	6,542	28,422	28.8
1931	124.0	138,817	.11	11,152	4,660	6,492	27,797	28.1
1932	124.8	133,200	.11	11,799	5,264	6,535	27,238	29.3
1933	125.6	135,015	.11	11,440	4,982	6,458	27,590	28.9
1934	126.4	136,975	.11	11,130	4,762	6,368	28,017	28.9
1935	127.3	137,966	.11	11,615	5,187	6,428	28,006	28.7
1936	128.1	166,121	.13	11,323	4,893	6,430	35,244	28.0
1937	128.9	178,108	.14	10,932	4,520	6,412	36,721	26.8
1938	129.8	183,455	.14	11,083	4,690	6,393	39,719	27.7
1939	130.1	187,893	.14	10,920	4,500	6,406	39,082	26.6
1940	132.1	264,118	.20	11,000	4,619	6,381	56,480	25.6
1941	133.4	1,455,565	1.09	22,532	10,573	11,959	106,456	8.9

Table 1. Regular Army strength, deployed strength and size relative to population.⁷

Citizen Soldiers

While the Regular Army of 1898-1941 was able to mount various expeditions and maintain overseas commitments with modest expansions to its strength, on two occasions after Root introduced his reforms it expanded rapidly to meet the requirements of a large scale crisis: 1917-1918 during World War I, and in 1940-1941 prior to World War II. The Army enabled this expansion by a call for volunteers, by conscription and by mobilizing the standing reserve force which was principally the National Guard. Through legislation, the Army was gradually able to expand its influence over the Guard in an effort to achieve – at least to some degree – the federally controlled reserve envisioned by Upton. Additionally, the Army developed a unique system for procuring reserve officer manpower via the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Program and to a lesser degree after World War I through Citizen Military Training Camps. This provided a large pool of trained officer manpower in a time of crisis.

When Elihu Root attempted to institute the federally controlled reserve as called for by Upton, he met strong opposition from Congress and the National Guard Association. This opposition would remain a constant for the next four decades. Instead, he was able to get Congress to agree to increased federal control of the National Guard in times of crisis by the Militia Act of 1903 and its 1908 amendment. The Militia Act of 1903 established the state militias as the National Guard and provided for standardized organization and equipment patterned after the Regular Army. It made federal funds available to the states for their National Guard and authorized detailing of Regular officers to Guard units for training. The Act's principal shortcoming was that it limited the term of Presidential call up to nine months and forbid use of the National Guard

overseas. The amendment of 1908 and subsequent legislation reduced these restrictions by giving the President the right to prescribe the length of federal service. Additional military legislation passed in 1908 created the Medical Reserve Corps which authorized the placement of several hundred medical personnel on a federally controlled reserve status to be called to active duty if needed to augment the Army. From this would grow the U.S. Army Reserve. This was the first federally controlled reserve, free from state auspices.⁸

As American involvement in World War I became likely the Army had increasing concerns about its ability to mobilize on a large scale. As a way to augment the size of the Army and speed mobilization, in 1915 Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison, Root's successor, proposed creation of a 400,000-man volunteer force called the Continental Army. This would constitute a trained reserve under federal control as opposed to the state controlled National Guard.⁹ This again met strong opposition from Congress after heavy lobbying by the National Guard Association. As a compromise, Congress addressed the need for preparedness and, in particular, the requirement to maintain a pool of trained officer manpower by passing the National Defense Act of 1916. This act provided for an expansion of the Regular Army in peacetime to 175,000. Instead of the large federal reserve force envisioned in the Continental Army concept, Congress authorized an expansion of the National Guard to 400,000 and reaffirmed its role as the country's primary reserve force by providing for a dual oath making Guardsmen responsive to the orders of the President as well as the state governors. Additionally, the act expanded the Medical Reserve Corps, established in 1908, into a federally controlled Officer Reserve Corps and Enlisted Reserve Corps made of individuals who

could be mobilized to augment the Regular Army in wartime or who could provide officers and enlisted men to the National Guard.¹⁰

One of the most important factors in mobilization was how to provide for a large expansion in trained officer manpower on the scale needed to fight a war in Europe. Since 1913, the Army – on the initiative of Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood – experimented with a series of voluntary citizen military training camps for college men. Wood stated that, “The object of these camps is, primarily, to increase the present inadequate personnel of the trained military reserve of the United States by a class of men from whom, in time of national emergency, a large proportion of the commissioned officers will probably be drawn.”¹¹ These camps provided the model for the so-called “Plattsburg Camps” in 1915 and 1916 in which older businessmen volunteered for military training.¹² The National Defense Act of 1916 formalized these initiatives into an organized system under the ROTC program.

ROTC had its origins in the Morrill Act of July 2, 1862 which established the Land Grant colleges. Under the Act the Land Grant colleges were to provide for instruction in military tactics.¹³ Many colleges made participation in these programs compulsory since state legislators interpreted the Morrill Act, and later National Defense Act of 1916, as making ROTC compulsory for male students. This tradition continued at many schools with ROTC being compulsory on more than half of all campuses that had programs and at two thirds of the Land Grant colleges through the 1950s.¹⁴ The program was designed to provide officer manpower for a greatly expanded reserve force. The intent was that ROTC trained officers would be professional and competent enough to fill the

company grade ranks in the event of mobilization, but that relatively few would move on to the field grade ranks or become general officers.¹⁵

Mobilization during World War I, while smoother than experienced during the Spanish-American War, still highlighted some areas for improvement. The need for a large number of trained officers was met to a degree. The Officer Reserve Corps and ROTC provided 89,500 Reserve officers for the war effort, but one third of them were medical professionals.¹⁶ There was still a great need for combat officers which required heavy reliance on Officer Training Schools, the precursor to Officer Candidate School, and early graduation of West Point classes.¹⁷ Of concern to the states was the Army practice of breaking up many National Guard units and using the personnel as replacements to units of a greatly expanded wartime Army. This created strong resentment among National Guard personnel.

There were several proposals advanced to remedy these shortcomings. Secretary of War Newton Baker and Chief of Staff General Peyton March proposed a plan calling for a standing Army of 500,000. Colonel John McCauley Palmer, a noted military thinker of the day, advanced a proposal for a smaller Regular Army backed by a federally controlled reserve manned through Universal Military Training (UMT). This proposal gained the support of General Pershing. The National Guard Association opposed both approaches and any attempt to supplant its role as the nation's primary reserve force.¹⁸

In response, Congress passed the National Defense Act of 1920. Its chief provision was to create the Army of the United States as a single force made up of the standing Regular Army, a federally controlled Organized Reserve, and the United

States Army National Guard. The act provided for uniformity of training and equipment among the components, and charged the Regular Army with overseeing the training and mobilization plans of the reserve component as one of their major peacetime responsibilities. The Organized Reserve would provide officers and enlisted men with special skills, such as medical or legal expertise, as well as with a pool of officers and units to augment the Regular Army and National Guard during initial mobilization. The Act further expanded and strengthened the ROTC program, as well as made provision for a series of voluntary Citizens' Military Training Camps (CMTC) that the Army would run every summer from 1921 through 1941. Through voluntary attendance at four successive camps, the attendee could apply for a commission. The strengthening of the ROTC and the formalization of the CMTC were a compromise by Congress agreed on in lieu of UMT. Finally, the Act established the Militia Bureau, later renamed the National Guard Bureau, which gave the Army a means with which to coordinate Guard operations at the federal level.¹⁹

Mobilization for World War II began in 1940. While not without difficulty, the Army expanded from a force of just fewer than 188,000 to a force of almost 1.5 million personnel by 1941. The system worked as designed with National Guard Units called to active duty in September of 1940, though not without some question as to whether they would remain mobilized past their first year or be used outside of the Western Hemisphere, both of which Congress eventually approved.²⁰ The Guard mobilized all 18 of its divisions during this period. The pool of Reserve officers provided by ROTC and the CMTC proved its worth in the early phases, both as fillers to Regular and National Guard units, as well as providing the cadre for the 61 new divisions and other

units activated. More than 100,000 ROTC officers would serve in the Army and this core of trained manpower was credited with enabling the Army to mobilize as rapidly as it did. In recalling the situation, General George C. Marshall stated, “Just what we would have done in the first phases of our mobilization without (ROTC graduates) I do not know.”²¹ What he did not publically state, however, was that by the end of the war all but two of the Army divisions in combat were commanded by Regulars.²²

The Regulars

Throughout the years 1898 to 1941 the Army devised a system to mobilize and expand quickly into a much larger force in a time of crisis by adjusting and enhancing its reserve component. In addition, it had to maintain multiple full time defense commitments overseas. The engine that would make this system work was the Regular Army. It would be the force that manned stateside and overseas garrisons, conducted expeditions, and bound together the disparate components of the Army in times of crisis requiring mobilization. The Regular Army was small relative to the population of the nation and the size of the mobilized force, but it would be an extremely capable elite. It was built around a core of long service professional officers and non-commissioned officers which was highly selective in recruiting and promoting its members. Additionally, the officers were trained in a system of institutional schools that were very rigorous and competitive.

The Regular Army of 1898 to 1941 was incredibly selective, rejecting the majority of potential recruits throughout the period based upon lack of legal, mental, moral or physical qualifications. As an example, in 1914 recruiters rejected 76 percent of potential recruits, with doctors rejecting a further 13 percent of those who passed the recruiters’ screening. From 1900 to 1916, the recruit rejection rate ranged from 70 to 81

percent.²³ Wartime conscription during World War I increased the available pool of men and allowed the Army to maintain relatively high standards of enlistment despite expansion. Following the cessation of conscription in the post-war period, Army strength remained higher than the pre-war norm; as such there was some decline in the quality of recruits accepted, though rejection rates still reached 50 percent. With the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the large pool of unemployed men seeking enlistment allowed the Army to be more selective and rejection rates again increased.²⁴

For the officer ranks, gaining a commission in the Regular Army and being promoted through the ranks was a very competitive and selective process. It began with competitive selection for admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point, direct appointment from the enlisted ranks based upon competitive examination, or direct appointment from a handful of military colleges. These sources provided the majority of Regular Army officers.²⁵ In the case of the West Point trained officers, they went through a course in which one quarter to one third failed to graduate.²⁶ After graduation the majority of West Point graduates of this period made the military a career and the length of officer service during this era bears this out. An analysis of classes between 1865 and 1936 (table 2) shows that the majority of graduates served at least a twenty year career in the Army.

Years	5 year %	10 year %	15 year %	20 year %	25 year %	30 year %
Classes of 1865-1870	72	61	59	58	42	38
Classes of 1871-1901	91	85	78	72	64	48
Classes of 1902-1936	88	79	72	66	62	50

Table 2: Percentages of USMA class graduates still serving on active duty at five year intervals.²⁷

Once commissioned, the Army based promotion of officers upon competitive examination through the rank of major. This was a holdover from the 19th century when in 1890 the War Department prescribed a set of examinations for promotion through the rank of major. These examinations covered a range of military subjects and were augmented by a system of installation level schools which units required their junior officers to attend.²⁸

What made the Regular Army officers true experts in their profession was the rigorous schooling system instituted by Secretary of War Root as outlined by Upton. The details of the system evolved over time, but followed an outline that we still recognize today: a basic “garrison school;” an advanced course or “School of the Line;” a staff college, and a war college. The schools, with the exception of the War College were competitively graded and the Army rewarded superior performance. Officers in the garrison school who achieved a 95 percent score or higher in a subject area were exempt from having to take the promotion exam in that area for the next five years. A score between 90 and 94 percent exempted the officer from that subject for three years. Potential and merit demonstrated in garrison school lead to an officer’s selection for the School of the Line, which was the first year curriculum at the General Service and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Selection was highly competitive since infantry and cavalry regiments could send only one officer to each course, and the engineer and artillery branches could only send two to three. Of those attending the School of the Line, the faculty only selected about half to attend the second year Staff College course.²⁹

The School of the Line and Staff School were academically rigorous with many graded requirements. The goal of most School of the Line students was to make high enough grades to be selected for the second year Staff College course. There were many graded tactical problems as well as military history, military law, and foreign language instruction. Many students of the era recalled long, strenuous days, devoted to the classroom, after hours study, and field exercises. George C. Marshall, a member of the class of 1907, declared it “the hardest work I ever did.”³⁰

While the pressure of grading was not quite as heavy in the Staff College during the second year, it was still highly competitive as officers believed that one’s class standing would determine future assignments and promotion.³¹ It was in this class that the student officers began to learn how to master large scale tactical problems involving divisions and corps. The course of instruction helped the officers “visualize the command of large units.”³² This was particularly important in light of the fact that in peacetime the Army did not have the number of troops needed for large scale maneuvers. J. Lawton Collins, both a student and an instructor at Leavenworth, stated: “It was at Leavenworth that most of our senior commanders, few of whom had commanded a combat unit larger than a battalion, learned the techniques of commanding large units.”³³

The final rung on the Army’s schooling ladder was the Army War College. It was an ungraded course which focused on national level strategy and mobilization, much as it does today. The course itself was ungraded, but selection was a significant measure of an officer’s ability and potential; from the ranks of War College graduates came all of those bound for higher command and staff positions. George C. Marshall noted that

Regular Army officers of the era had been through “a competition which from the standpoint of severity is unique among American educational institutions.”³⁴ In remarking on the quality of training of those on the general staff he stated, “The Regular Army Officer on the War Department General Staff, unlike the business or professional man, except possibly the doctor, goes to school or college on a competitive basis until he is 50 years old . . . [making him] . . . the product of the most extensive educational system in America.”³⁵

It was the demonstrated performance of Leavenworth and War College graduates during World War I which lead General Pershing to emphasize education in the post-war Army. Selection for promotion as well as the next level of schooling was based in large part on demonstrated performance and grading at the schools. Throughout the 1920s, and 1930s, the courses of instruction were expanded, modified and updated, but kept their essential selectiveness, structure and rigor. The officers of that era would alternate between tactical assignments and school assignments as both instructors and students. The net effect was to provide the Army with a cadre of highly trained officers who would be able to adapt to the challenges posed by contingency operations, large scale mobilization and large unit command. The system would again prove itself in combat. Thirty-four of the generals who commanded corps during World War II spent ten or more years in the Army school system prior to the war.³⁶ General J. Lawton Collins, one of those corps commanders, stated that during the rapid expansion of the Army as it mobilized for World War II, “The thing that saved the Army was the school system.”³⁷

Native Augmentation: The Philippine Scouts

While the Army had a system in place to handle large scale mobilization in time of major crisis, the job of maintaining American military commitments at other times fell to the small Regular Army. As noted in table 1, during the period 1898 to 1941, the Army maintained a significant presence overseas relative to its overall size. The commitment to the Philippines was the largest and longest of these and it clearly stretched the Regular Army's capacity. American military presence in the Philippines involved active combat from 1898 through 1913 and necessitated the deployment of 60 percent of the Regular Army; even following hostilities, Army strength remained at ten percent until World War I.³⁸ In the drawdown after World War I, the Army still maintained roughly 11,000 soldiers in the Philippines. The dilemma posed to the Army was how to maintain the level of force needed to fight an active insurgency for 15 years and then continue with occupation, nation building, and territorial defense tasks for the next 28 years with a force that was small and had many commitments. The solution was to use native troops to augment U.S. Army forces in the Philippines in the form of the Philippine Scouts, and ultimately through the formation of the Philippine Division. This force would use native manpower trained and lead by Regular Army officers and non-commissioned officers. Ultimately it would make up from 40 to 60 percent of Army manpower in the Philippines in the years from 1904 through the eve of World War II.³⁹

The Philippine Scouts offered a solution to a critical manpower problem facing the Army in the Philippines. It had to fight a counterinsurgency campaign over a large geographical area with a limited number of personnel. The Army was simply not large enough and did not have enough logistical capacity to maintain a large force for counterinsurgency, stabilization and nation building operations on the opposite side of

the globe. The size of the Army in the Philippines at the beginning of the Philippine Insurrection in 1899 was just over 30,000 troops and would eventually grow to 70,000; however, this force proved insufficient to effectively occupy the vast terrain of the Philippine Islands. Additionally, a large number of these troops were state volunteer units who had volunteered to fight in the Spanish American War and would be returning to the United States in the summer of 1899. These men were replaced by U.S. volunteer units who also enlisted for a short term of service.⁴⁰ By June of 1901, the Army forces in the Philippines were made up almost exclusively of Regulars.⁴¹ Faced with a continuing shortfall of men, the solution was to enlist native troops in the cause of the United States.

The Philippine Scouts began as an initiative by junior officers to solve the problem of needing increased manpower, as well as the requirement for guides with knowledge of local terrain and people. Despite some initial hesitancy on the part of higher level commanders, by January 1901 – given the pending departure of the U.S. Volunteer regiments – General Arthur MacArthur, U.S. Commander in the Philippines, authorized the recruiting of Philippine Scouts “to any extent you deem expedient in any manner you regard best.”⁴²

The Scouts developed into a well disciplined and effective fighting force and their officers were highly complementary of their abilities. General Leonard Wood noted in his annual report of 1906, seven years after the inception of the Philippine Scouts, “The Scouts have maintained their previous reputation as a valuable and thoroughly efficient body of native troops.”⁴³ As the war against the Philippine insurgents continued, the Army increasingly turned pacification tasks over to the Scouts. By 1907, the majority of

companies in action against the insurgents were Philippine scouts.⁴⁴ The Scouts also proved to be a low cost force to maintain. Major General William P. Duvall, commander of the Division of the Philippines in 1909, noted that the cost of a Scout was about half that of an American Soldier since they required half the pay, half the rations, built their own camps and did not require the travel expense incurred in shipping a soldier from the U.S. He estimated, “The Quartermaster expenses for maintaining a battalion of Scouts of 440 men are less than for maintaining an American Garrison of 200 men.”⁴⁵ The Scouts proved extremely effective in fighting enemy guerillas, and further relieved the Army of having to call up additional Volunteer units or to commit additional Regular formations. This was important given that the American public was growing increasingly weary of the lengthy war in the Philippines.⁴⁶

After active combat against Philippine insurgents ended in 1913, the Regular Army still faced the task of garrisoning the Philippines and – in the post World War I era – preparing to defend it from possible Japanese attack. By 1920, the Army formally incorporated Philippine Scout regiments into its regimental organization and from 1921 until World War II the Philippine Scouts would make up over half of the strength of U.S. Army troops in the Philippines. The major U.S. Army combat formation in the Philippines from 1921 to the beginning of World War II, The Philippine Division, was led by American officers and consisted of one U.S. infantry regiment, with the remaining two regiments and supporting troops consisting of Philippine Scouts.⁴⁷

Lessons Applied Today

During the period from 1898 to 1941 the Army developed a system that fit the circumstances which we again confront today. We are a large country with relatively secure borders, a maritime power with economic interests in the Far East, a historical

antipathy towards maintaining a large standing army, yet have global commitments that might necessitate rapidly expanding the Army in a time of large scale crisis. A return to the model of Upton as implemented over the period described is worth examining. The United States strayed from this model during the Cold War due to the need to maintain a much larger standing Army than was our historical norm. While the system the Army devised was not perfect, we must return to its key elements, and improve upon its weaknesses.

Overall size of the army must ultimately be determined by balancing strategy against budgetary realities. Upton's formula of 1,000 Regulars for every 1,000,000 of population was probably too small for the requirements placed upon the Army.

Throughout the period 1898-1941, the Congress never maintained the Army at its full authorized strength. Many regiments were maintained at a reduced or cadre strength with only the regiments stationed overseas resourced at full strength. Throughout the period, multiple Secretaries of War stated that the Army was simply not big enough to accomplish its many missions. In 1925, Dwight Davis, the Assistant Secretary of War asserted succinctly in the War Department annual report:

[The] Secretary of War stated on numerous occasions that the present strength of the Regular Army is not sufficient to permit the accomplishment of its mission as a training and instructor cadre for the civilian components and activities, much less to allow the perfection of its own essential training.⁴⁸

The immediacy of the threat during the Cold War mandated a larger standing Army with a much quicker ability to mobilize. If looked at in comparison to the population, the active Army of the Cold War was made up of a significantly larger portion of the population and maintained for a much longer period than during previous expansions. During the period of the Cold War through the Vietnam War, the Army

ranged from a low of 593,167 personnel in 1950 to a high of 1,460,000 in 1968.⁴⁹ This was from .39 percent to .74 percent of the population respectively. After Vietnam and the discontinuation of conscription – but before the post 1991 drawdown – the Army maintained a force of about 750,000 to 780,000 which varied from .32 to .35 percent of the population.⁵⁰

To maintain these force levels and the ability to respond more quickly in a crisis, the Army was forced to choose between relying on conscription prior to 1972, and then upon a heavy use of the Reserve Components after conscription ended. One problem that the Army has never fully solved is the need for a fully capable federally controlled reserve force as envisioned by Upton. Each time the Army advanced the idea it was blocked by Congress after heavy lobbying by the National Guard Association. The Army Reserve as it is currently structured consists primarily of combat support, combat service support and training support units and, as such, is not a capable combat force. The issue is that National Guard units, despite legislation enabling their enhanced control by the Army when mobilized, are always tied to their state in anything less than full scale mobilization.

In recent years, Guard units have been used almost interchangeably with Regular Army units for contingency missions. This has not been without controversy and some distinct operational disadvantages. The 1st Brigade of the 34th Infantry Division based in Minnesota was caught up in the “surge” of forces to Iraq. It served 16 months in Iraq and spent 22 months mobilized, only two months short of the maximum time allowed by law at the current level of mobilization. The repeated and extended deployment of National Guard units also made guard personnel and equipment

unavailable for state missions. Louisiana and Mississippi Guard units experienced significant shortfalls in their ability to respond to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 due to ongoing operations in Iraq. In 2007 the Governor of Kansas complained to the media about the lack of Guard personnel and equipment available to respond to tornados. The political pressure of these circumstance resulted in National Guard units being limited to only 12 months mobilization and nine months deployment.⁵¹

Maintaining this force level on active duty also compelled the Army to make compromises in the training and selection of officers. The small, elite Regular Army became much larger and more egalitarian, particularly in its officer corps. This force size required a much greater number of officers on active duty and necessitated the use of an increasing number of “long term non-regulars . . . [and a] . . . reduced utilization of short term active duty reserve officers.”⁵² This larger availability of officers therefore enabled many West Point graduates to leave the Army early rather than staying for a full career. Selection for promotion and schooling became increasingly egalitarian as well. There were no longer promotion examinations where an officer had to demonstrate a mastery of skill and knowledge; an officer was judged strictly on his evaluation report file. Academic grades at basic and career courses, the descendents of the old “Garrison School” and “School of the Line,” now counted very little toward future school selection. Some selectivity was maintained in selection for the Command and General Staff College, where for many years only the top half of a year group – as judged by efficiency reports – was allowed to attend, but even this selectivity eventually ended as the Army made the decision that all officers would attend some form of Staff College starting in 2003. Grading, while present, is no longer used to determine a class order of

merit and future assignments. All who attend and meet course requirements graduate. Eventually the Army removed all real distinction of being a Regular Army officer, decreeing in 2005: "As of 1 May 2005, all officers commissioned for service on the ADL (Active Duty List) received RA appointments, regardless of method or source of commission."⁵³

The question of use of native auxiliaries to augment the Army during contingency missions is one that has occurred multiple times during the Cold War as well as in recent years. While not as integrated as the Philippine Scouts who were considered part of the U.S. Army, the Security Force Assistance mission has frequently found Soldiers advising and training native troops as a bridge to eventual independent operations and U.S. withdrawal. The Army has maintained a number of Military Assistance and Advisory Groups (MAAG) in many countries since the end of World War II. The MAAG in the Philippines built the Philippine Army after World War II from the remnants of the Scouts and helped develop it into the modern Philippine Army. Additional American advisory efforts have taken place in Greece, Thailand, Taiwan, Iran, Japan, El Salvador, and most notably in combat in Korea and Vietnam.⁵⁴ These missions were not solely the responsibility of Special Forces, but involved the widespread use of conventional soldiers to accomplish the mission of training large scale general purpose armies. As the native armies grew more sophisticated and robust as a result of American support, the U.S. Army was able to gradually reduce its presence and eventually turn over the bulk of operations to the native force. This occurred in Vietnam in 1972, and has happened over time in Korea where the U.S. Army currently fields only one ground maneuver brigade while the Army of the Republic of Korea is a multi-corps, multi-

division force. Problems in this area have been twofold, however. First, the Army has never institutionalized this mission except in its Special Forces, forcing it to relearn the same lessons during conflict. Second, during wartime the Army focus on this mission tends to wane as U.S. units become heavily engaged in combat. The Army then relegates the mission to a secondary status not deserving of its full attention and best personnel.⁵⁵

After the mid-1990's drawdown the Army maintained a force ranging from just over 480,000 to just over 560,000, which averaged .18 percent of the population; therefore closer to the ratios of 1898 to 1941. It is for others to determine the precise size needed, but a return to the principles of Emory Upton, modified to accommodate modern imperatives would be a good starting point as we contemplate Army requirements going into the future. The system of having a small, elite regular Army, augmented by a large federally controlled reserve force containing a large pool of trained officer manpower worked reasonably well in 1917 and again in 1940 when it had to expand rapidly. Having forces trained and accustomed to working with native troops is also a significant force-multiplier for the Army when required to conduct contingency missions in the absence of full mobilization.

The specific recommendations for moving forward would be as follows:

- Develop a federally controlled Reserve with a combat capability that is closely tied to the Regular Army. As the Army downsizes it may be feasible to turn the recently activated 4th brigade combat teams (BCT) in the ten Army divisions into cadre strength Army Reserve units co-located with their parent divisions under close training and leadership oversight. This would provide

ten brigade combat teams that could be available immediately as an operational reserve without the need for going through the states or having to curtail mobilization and deployment based upon state pressures. This would also return the Guard to its role as a homeland defense force and strategic reserve.

- Enhance the ROTC program and encourage participation, perhaps through student loan credit or some similar incentive. Prioritize graduate service in the Army Reserve BCTs and allow some graduates to have no active duty serve obligation, but be subject to call up in the event of mobilization.
- Return to the original meaning of the Regular Army commission. Recruit and train West Point officers and ROTC Distinguished Military Graduates – particularly at other military academies – with the idea that they are expected to be career officers.
- Return to the practice of promotion examinations and competitive selection for officer education, and restore academic rigor to the service school system. A vital mission, the Army must ensure requisite conventional personnel are trained in this specialty beyond those provided by Special Forces.
- Make Security Force Assistance and the advising of indigenous troops a key consideration in operations and thoroughly address this competency in the Army education and training system. Ensure that the Army is very selective in who conducts this mission.

We have never been able to predict the future with certainty, but we have devised systems in the past that were flexible enough to adapt to myriad crises and

contingencies. This is an instance where a close examination of our past may reveal a way ahead for the future.

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